

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEGUCI 04977 191436Z

42

ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SP-02 PM-03 NSC-05 NSCE-00

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O 191350Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8619

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MAMMANAGUA IMMEDIATE

AMDBBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE 3386

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 4977

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT

REF: DAO MSG DTD 182158Z NOV 74

1. MISSION OFFICERS HAVE BEEN PICKING UP REPORTS OF AN IMMINENT COUP (TECHNICAL OR OTHERWISE) AT AN ACCELERATED RATE TODAY (NOVEMBER 18). REPORTS HAVE COME PRIMARILY FROM MILITARY SOURCES, SINCE ARMED FORCES ARE PRIMARY LOCUS OF POWER AND DECISION TO ACT IN THIS SITUATION MUST ESSENTIALLY BE A MILITARY ONE. WHILE POLITICIANS AND PRIVATE SECTORS HAVE BEEN PRESSING FOR CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT FOR CONSIDERABLE TIME, THERE IS NO CLEAR INDICATION THAT THEY ARE CLOSELY INVOLVED IN PRESENT PLANNING. THEY HAVE OF COURSE HELPED TO CREATE A PRO-COUP AMBIENT WHICH MAKES A MOVE WITHIN MILITARY EASIER, BUT BASIC INGREDIENT IN PRESENT PLOTTING APPEARS TO BE WIDESPREAD DIS-SATISFACTION
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PAGE 02 TEGUCI 04977 191436Z

WITHIN MILITARY ITSELF OVER FAILURE OF GENERAL LOPEZ

TO GET GOH MOVING ON ITS DEVELOPMENT GOALS.

2. TODAY, NOVEMBER 18, RUMORS OF PENDING CHANGES ARE ALL OVER THE CITY AND THE TALK IS QUITE OPEN WITH LITTLE PRETENSION OF SECRECY. THIS AFTERNOON'S EL DIA REPORTS ON ITS FRONT PAGE THAT THE NATIONAL DEFENSE COUNCIL WILL MEET NOVEMBER 19 "TO DISCUSS THE POLICIES OF THE CHIEF OF STATE". FROM THIS EXTRAORDINARY MEETING, EL DIA SAYS, CAN SURGE "MEASURES CHANGING THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE COUNTRY" AND "NEW ARRANGEMENTS IN THE MAXIMUM AUTHORITY OF THE ARMED FORCES AND THE COUNTRY."

3. THE OUTCOME OF THIS MEETING WILL PROVIDE SOME OF THE ELEMENTS STILL MISSING IN THE EQUATION. IT APPEARS EVIDENT THAT THE MILITARY INTEND TO TAKE A MUCH MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING. WHETHER LOPEZ WILL RETAIN HIS POSITION OF CHIEF OF STATE, IN EFFECT CARRYING OUT THE POLICIES DECIDED UPON BY THE DEFENSE COUNCIL AND IMPLEMENTED BY A REVISED CABINET, OR WILL OPT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE GOVERNMENT IS THE CURRENT QUESTION. ALL REPORTS INDICATE THAT LOPEZ WILL BE GIVEN AN ULTIMATUM OF THIS KIND AT TOMORROW'S MEETING. THE ULTIMATE RESOLUTION MAY NOT BE ARRIVED AT IMMEDIATELY. LOPEZ MAY BE GIVEN A PERIOD OF PROBATION, AS IT WERE, TO WORK UNDER THIS NEW ARRANGEMENT BUT THE GROUP BEHIND THE CURRENT PLANNING APPEARS DETERMINED ONE WAY OR ANOTHER TO END THE PRESENT DRIFT IN THE GOH. IN THE EVENT LOPEZ ELECTS OR IS TOLD TO GO, THERE IS NO CLEAR INDICATION YET AS TO WHAT OR WHO MAY REPLACE HIM. IN ALL PROBABILITY A JUNTA, BUT ITS MEMBERSHIP APPARENTLY HAS NOT YET BEEN AGREED UPON -- A FACT WHICH MAY WIN LOPEZ A LITTLE MORE TIME. THE ACTIVISTS REPORTEDLY WOULD LIKE TO AVOID A COUP IN THE USUAL SENSE, OUT OF CONCERN FOR THE COUNTRY'S IMAGE ABROAD AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER FOREIGN ASSISTANCE IN THE RECONSTRUCTION PHASE OF THE RECENT DISASTER. IF LOPEZ COOPERATES, THE PRESENT CHANGES MAY BE BILLED PRIMARILY AS A REORGANIZATION OF THE MILITARY, BUT WITH LOPEZ POSSIBLY LOSING HIS CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEGUCI 04977 191436Z

POSITION AS CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES.

4. THE UPSURGE OF RUMORS IN THE PAST FEW DAYS AND THEIR OPENNESS STRONGLY SUGGEST THAT THE ACTIVISTS HAVE SUCCEEDED IN GETTING THEIR DUCKS IN A ROW AND HAVE LINED UP THE NECESSARY SUPPORT OF KEY COMMANDERS. IF SO, THE CHANGE PROBABLY WILL BE RELATIVELY NON-VIOLENT. OUR SOURCES ARE OF AN ORIENTATION WHICH

SUGGESTS THAT US INTERESTS ARE NOT THREATENED AND THIS
IS INDICATED ALSO BY THE EVIDENT INTEREST OF THE
ACTIVISTS IN ENSURING THAT THE EMBASSY IS INFORMED
AND BY THEIR EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER CONTINUANCE OF USG
ASSISTANCE.

5. THE MISSION WILL BE REPORTING AS FULLER INFORMATION
BECOMES AVAILABLE AND/OR NEW DEVELOPMENTS TAKE PLACE.
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